WHEN THE SUN ...SE IN THE WEST

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BY

JOHN PAUL

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WHEN THE SUN ROSE

IN

THE WEST.

A STORY OF THE FIRST ADVENT
With a Japanese Setting.

BY JOHN PAUL.
Vice-President, Asbury College; Preacher for Inter-Denominational Conventions, Japan, 1917.

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INTRODUCTORY

THERE was a time when, for those concerned about eternal life, all roads led to Jerusalem. An agitation is said to have gone throughout the East when our Savior was born. In the appointment of Divine providence, wise men were met on their own plane of thinking; and, in terms or symbols familiar to them, were given communications designed to introduce them to the new-born King of Righteousness. Universal unrest obtained, leading to the collapse of old systems, to pilgrimages after something better, and to improving and revamping of pagan creeds, in poor attempts to satisfy the universal cry of the human heart.

There was not only the "other" wise man, as one writer has expressed it, but there were many other wise men; and, while they did not all adopt the method of those wise men recorded by Saint Matthew, it may be assumed that many others did as certainly make reports, although the effect of their reports will remain shrouded in as much mystery as surrounds the final report of those wise men from the East who returned "into their own country another way."

It was about this time that Japan was making the religion of Shintoism for its

hungry-hearted multitudes, the incompleteness of which she later recognized, and tried to supplement with Buddhism. We may mention, as giving a cue to part of this story, the theory of a prominent non-Christian Japanese professor, now in one of the Imperial Universities, that the early tides of immigration to Japan, representing the present population, were from regions adjacent to Judea, and brought with them certain ideas of the Hebrew religion, which they sought to work out in the system of Shintoism. Certainly their Shinto temples seem patterned like Solomon's temple, and they have the shewbread, and the laver; and their priests are clad in striking likeness to the Hebrew priests. Then the red torii, all their own invention, is thought by some considerable religious authorities to have a remote reference to the blood-sprinkled door posts of the first passover.

The professor to whom we refer, thinks that a group of the immigrants landed in the province of Izumo (Pronounced Ezoomo) and named it in honor of their old home in Edom, being themselves descendant from Abraham through Esau, and selecting religious tenets and forms from the religion of Jacob's tribe. All this is for the reader to dispose of as his judgment dictates; it merely slants up to the reason why we find the hero of our story beginning his career at Matsue, in the province of Izumo.

WHEN THE SUN ROSE IN THE WEST.

CHAPTER I.

THE SECRET EXECUTION.

BOUT the time that the Christ was born, there lived in Matsue, Japan, a growing young trader, known as Kimura Jimbo San. He was less than thirty years old, the son of a prominent family. It was one bright spring morning, just after the rising of an early mist, that Kimura sat in the gate of his ancestral home and saw his father, beginning to totter a little with age, walk up the hillside by a private path toward his place of prayer. No day ever seemed farther removed from exceptional events than this one. Young Kimura was engaged, partly in reverie and partly in reflection upon business matters, little suspecting that this day should mark the beginning of the end of his career as a business man. As the reciting of what immediately followed involves somewhat of responsibility, we shall let young Kimura himself state the events, and expound them, in the light of his own observations. Beginning at the time when he saw his father

disappear up the path to the place of prayer, he says:

"A brief half hour seems only to have passed, when a squad of soldiers, known as the executioners, armed with swords and bows and arrows, came down the hillside and passed into the road. A strange and formidable look was on their faces as they glanced toward the house, and I was chilled with horror.

"A year before, my father had been given a secret trial by a busy religious prosecutor, before the prefectural judge, who sent him, by an officer, to be examined before a company of Shinto priests, for heresy in regard to the existence of gods, and for want of fidelity to the ancestors. It was alleged that permitting an influential man like him to withhold worship from the departed spirits of the ancestors had caused a plague, a storm, and an invasion of wild animals in the prefecture. He tried to convince the priests that he respected the ancestry as much as they, but that a heavenly signal had been given him, approving his worship of the one living and true God, and that he could not compromise. The priests, eager to save his useful life, asked him to erect a torii over his path which led to the place of prayer, and thus impress the officials that he had no disposition to dishonor the religious compact by which the peace of the tribes

was established. He consented; though he was never sure afterward that this act did not represent weakness instead of wisdom on his part. He, however, believed that the torii had some spiritual meaning in the past, and some prophetic meaning which pertains to our salvation. Once, in a vision he had seen a mystical torii through which all the Japanese nation seemed to be passing, up to the altars of the true and living God. He looked for this spiritual gate to open in Japan; but could not tell whether it would be soon or late. He escaped from that trouble, through the friendship of the priests, who interceded for him. But our rulers try men without letting them hear about it, and pronounce and execute sentences without serving notice; so, when I saw the squad of soldiers, I had horrible forebodings, for I knew not what might have developed lately under the mysterious cover of the Courts.

"I could not venture to go and see about my father after the soldiers passed, but sent a neighbor, who found that while my father was kneeling in prayer, an evil sentence had been executed. The soldiers had pierced his body through with many arrows, and he was dead. Though treated as a foreigner and stranger, he was the true type of our new Japanese people, of whom our

country needed an increasing number. He should have been regarded the highest of all high priests in Japan, refusing as he did to have his principles poisoned by the foolish superstitions of the dark aborigines who were being assimilated or driven back before us."

The night following his father's burial young Kimura spent in prayer. Till then, he was a busy trader and a man of affairs; but his father's mantle fell on him, and he received his call that night, together with an order to depart out of his country, to a place where he should meet men from distant lands, whose eyes would supplement his vision; and hence, perhaps too slowly, but certainly with the purpose of obeying, he began to adjust his affairs in Matsue with a view to leaving. He had his eyes on a port which he was sure would answer to the one shown him in the vision, as his future base of operation.

CHAPTER II.

THE MIRACULOUS VISITOR.

KIMURA came near staying too long in Matsue, adjusting his affairs, before he gave heed to the vision and obeyed the call that came to him on that night of prayer. He should easily have foreseen that the same charges which were preferred against his father would be filed against him, as he was following in his father's footsteps. But a strange power had come on him the night after the funeral, and he could not feel afraid, and would not retreat. He had friends at the seat of the local government, and the chief commander of the prefectural guard was secretly enamored of his father's views and deeply mortified over the official murder of the elder Kimura. At the time of a great battle, some years before, this chief captain had come to the elder Kimura for a blessing on his forces, and this blessing had been followed by a military victory of lasting effect over the Northern natives. Consequently, the captain felt very much as Balak would have felt if some underlings had tried and executed

Baalam. It was natural, therefore, that the younger Kimura should feel himself secure, and quite natural to assume that an execution parallel with that of his father could never take place in Matsue again.

A year passed before notice was taken of the fact that Kimura was following in his father's footsteps; but the old enemy tried again the game of preferring secret charges against him. This time, however, the indictment came under the eyes of friends, who demanded that the court should hear an argument for the condemned man, and should permit him to appear and answer for himself. The defending attorney was acquainted with the traditions of the Japanese, and was accorded freedom of speech, to present Kimura's side. Being a man of independent and progressive temperament, the attorney spoke with an aggressiveness that might easily endanger his own life. His views of government and religious tolerance were eighteen centuries ahead of his time; and the occasion of his speech improvised a sounding board that caused his words to echo from the Inland Sea to Hokkaido and the Bay of Tokio. This quotation from his speech will give an insight to the traditions which have been fostered in the Land of the Rising Sun. He said:

"When our people came to this coast six hundred years ago, they brought exactly the convictions which are held by Kimura San. In our ambition to build a great nation, we sought to conciliate the dark natives, who were too strong for us, by humoring what we then called their superstition with regard to the spirits of the ancestors and the existence of a variety of gods. In another century, we began to take their doctrines seriously; and, now, the fusion is so complete that we cannot distinguish what we brought here from what we found when we came. It is a well known fact that we have always had a small group who clung to the traditions incidental to the doctrine of one God; and it is not proved that the evils which have befallen us have been because of these people. Indeed their lives have been so high above the average morals of our race that their very cleanness of habit has been a provocation to the naturally suspicious mind of the Shinto, inducing charges of all kinds of witchcraft. It is a fact that we have ceased to suffer from tribal differences on account of religion; and it is childish in us to suppose that the spirits of the ancestors are grieved with the community because of the fact that a few people accord honor to the Almighty and to Him only. I thefore request this honorable court to

dismiss our worthy subject, and treat no further with men who institute prosecutions upon religious grounds."

The lines being thus sharply drawn, the Shintoists imbibed a fanatical determination which was soon to result in the driving out of every trace of the true religion of the ancients from the great land of Hondo.

Kimura was sentenced to be boiled to death in a bath; and was given till the second day at noon to prepare himself. That night as he prayed to God in the silence of his prison, a mysterious man stood by him and gave him advice. He was counseled to command his family to take a boat which was to sail next morning for Moji, before the fury of the mob should fall upon them, after the execution of his sentence. He was also told by this visitor that events were taking place in the land beyond the floods, from whence his fathers came, which would bring good tidings to all nations, including Japan; "But, by their own wilfulness and cruelty," said the voice in the vision, "Your people in this beautiful world have judged themselves unworthy of early benefits; and the Sun of Peace which now shines upon the cradle of your tribe shall be late in rising on Japan. Yet the prayers of your fathers have been heard; and some day the glory of the Lord shall beautify this

chosen island. But earthquakes first must shake it; and storms must sweep it; and those who dip My servants in boiling baths must see their country bathed in blood, before the Healer of Hearts shall walk their village streets." Kimura had not time to ask with regard to his own sentence or make a request, ere the visitor was gone. He remembered this voice as the same that had spoken to him out of the darkness on the night after his father's funeral. The call which he had received on that first visit had been worded in speech that was hard to understand; but it seemed clear to Kimura that he was directed to leave Hondo and remove to Kyushu, from under the jurisdiction of the Hondo daimyos; to build him a house on the coast of pearls, learn from the passing ships the location of the Prince of Peace, and, leaving his family, make a pilgrimage and bring Christ back to Japan.

Unspeakable agony came into Kimura's mind when he awoke to the fact that he had permitted the strange visitor to depart without asking of all these matters, and making a plea with regard to his lost call. "I have sinned," he muttered to himself, in choking tones of despair. "I have sinned an unpardonable sin. I was told a year ago by this same Divine visitor to proceed to Kyu-

shu, out of reach of these officials, and begin planning my pilgrimage in search of Japan's Savior; but I trusted in human protection, and awaited my own convenience to obey God's order. For the sake of a little property and the arranging of a little earthly business, I have caused my family to be sent away in desolation and gloom; and my own life, which had the promise of Divine honor, I have caused to be cut short in failure if not in dishonor." Then he prayed: "Great God, whom my fathers worshipped! If with my life I must pay the penalty of my stupid disobedience, have mercy upon my soul."

CHAPTER III.

THE SUPREME TEST.

BEFORE the day had dawned, the restless guard consented to convey to Kimura's family a message, and let his wife come and receive words from him at the prison door. He gave them his command to go to Moji on the ship which was to sail that morning; and, when he had become very stern in his words, his wife, with bitter reluctance, consented to go. Taking with them their money and movable stuff, they dragged themselves sorrowfully on to the ship about the third hour of the day. All the town seemed draped in mourning; all the trees looked sad; every wave that lashed the beach seemed filled with moans and wails, and every flapping of the sails sounded like the sigh of a dying man. Silent tears, like early morning rain, poured from the eyes of the lonely woman whose honored husband, though living, was dead; and the little children clutched her skirts in suppressed terror. Off through the waters went the graceful ship, carrying the little company whose hearts were in the

Matsue prison; whose hearts, may I say, without straining a figure, were soon to be boiled. They landed in Moji, dazed; so nearly without their wits that a petty officer had to cross-question them before he could get them to wish for a lodging place. The cloud hung so heavily upon them that it was some days before they could think to secure a small house and begin plans for the future. But eventually they composed themselves and set their faces bravely toward life, determined to make the best of it. For a while they must propel themselves along without impulse or incentive, till they should be able to take heart again.

On the next day after the departure of the Moji ship, when the shade of the prison roof reached a certain mark in the sunlight, Kimura was led forth to his boiling bath. When, by order of the officer, he stepped into the water it was already hot to the point of torture; but the executioner increased the fire of the furnace from an outside door till the steam of boiling water was coming in plumes from every crack of the enclosure, sufficient to remove the flesh from a man suspended anywhere above it. Then the officer, who had watched into the evening, went his way to sleep. There was threatening and subdued excitement in the community through the

day; but that instinctive horror of death to which all men are heirs, deterred anyone from opening the door upon the condemned culprit's boiling bath till the next day. The executioner left orders with a prison servant to authorize Kimura's family to take charge of his remains; though the servant did no more than shout the notice excitedly at the door of the vacant house, taking the echo of his own voice for a reply. But Kimura was not dead! After the first few minutes of torture he was not even aware that the water had been above the temperature of his customary bath. We cannot say whether this was due to a miscalculation of the executioner or to a miracle, though indications pointed to the latter. Kimura himself could not explain; though he knew that whatever the explanation should be, a Divine deliverance had come, and he was sure that it had been extended in order that he might repent and fulfil his life's calling. About midnight he put on his kimono, which had been carelessly dropped at the door, and departed from Matsue, over a mountain trail, setting his face toward Shimonoseki, which stands on the Straits opposite Moji. He had no serious fear of being pursued, for all thought he was dead. He journeyed steadily, as strength permitted, feeding upon the natural products by

the road; but he missed his path, and, in his eager excitement, traveled much out of his course, being several days in reaching Shimonoseki. When he arrived there, all was excitement. A war had burst out among the tribes of Hondo as suddenly as the thunder-clap that announces the coming torrents. It may have been developing for months, in the negotiations of the prefectural delegates; but now, rapid couriers were traveling over every interprovincial path, and armed alliances were being formed like magic. As a result of influential intrigues, begun in Matsue, secret orders had gone out from Kyoto for the execution of a large number of prominent men in privileged clans, at various points, on the ground that they were non-conformists to a semi-political religious formula which involved some kind of rite in which food and drink were given to the spirits of the ancestors. One in this age can have but the vaguest idea of the ancient ceremonies which were made the token of loyalty, and the bearing of these upon the ancient Japanese idea of national welfare; but it is sufficient to say that all the military lords did not concur in the order; and, as it struck at some of their right-hand men, the movers of the inquisition, and their allies, found themselves confronted with more serious

trouble than they had expected. A movement of counter destruction was ordered; and a war was on, the madness and suddenness of which would be hard to imagine in connection with the organizations of such a primitive time. Long before Kimura reached the Straits on the way to join his family, there was an order that no man be permitted to cross. In those days, because of some strong and conservative daimyos in Kyushu, that island enjoyed remarkable insulation from the exciting struggles of Hondo.

Kimura was arrested in his attempt to cross the Straits, and it was his fortune to lie in prison for some months, near the present port of Shimonoseki. During that time, those disasters which seem to come in groups, visited Japan. A mighty typhoon swept all the southern coasts; the most disastrous in the memory of man. An earthquake which destroyed many villages, created a lake in a southern district; and a volcanic eruption at Asama buried a village and created a raised valley in a depression far away from the crater. When the war was finally decided, after unprecedented bloodshed, all prisoners against whom there was no definite charge were released. This included Kimura, who, by not talking much, had left his keepers in ignorance as to his identity.

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW LEASE ON LIFE.

KIMURA immediately crossed the Strait, which is less than half an hour in a boat, and sought out his family in Moji. It was like one rising from the dead. If we had words to describe the scene of the family reunion it would furnish the most charming passage in our story. The joy of his wife was almost unsupportable; quite as deep as the sorrow of their parting at the Matsue prison cell; and the two shocks gave her a crown of prematurely gray hair.

Not for one moment during his latter imprisonment had Kimura doubted that he would escape from prison and reach Kyushu. He felt assured that the God who called him on the night after his father's burial and delivered him from the boiling bath would not permit any other obstruction to keep him from the mission of his life. His faith for his own earthly future had wavered, and his hope for an early visit of the Christ to Japan had gone into eclipse on the

night of his interview with the mysterious visitor in his death cell at Matsue. But now that he is free, he remembers that the man, if man he was, who visited him that night, said that earthquakes first must shake Japan, that storms must sweep it, and that those who dipped God's servants in boiling baths must witness their country bathed in blood. "Now this," Kimura reasoned, "must mean that those who put me in the boiling bath may live to see the day when the glory of the Lord shall beautify this chosen island. It must mean that the Prince of Peace will come in this generation. This seems especially plain now, since the prophecy of wars and storms and earthquakes has been so strikingly fulfilled. My visitor also told me that on account of Japan's love of darkness, and her violence, the Sun of Peace should be late in rising; but that may only mean that I shall be delayed for a few years in going upon this pilgrimage beyond the floods to bring Christ to Japan."

Thus reasoned Kimura, and thus his soul caught new enthusiasm. Inspired with the prospect of seeing the glory of God, he continued to give himself to prayer, and exhibiting among his fellow beings those principles of mercy, temperance and purity, as they had come to him in his visions of the Prince

of Peace. So complete was the offering of his soul and body; so much as dross did he count all earthly riches and honor, that he found it easy to get audience with God, and easy to overcome the world and live right; and it sometimes seemed to him that there was a garden of peace in his soul much like what he hoped all of Japan should be when she should open her doors to the Prince of Peace.

Kimura planned the scheme of his life with a business instinct. He would move to Nagasaki and build his family a nest; he would watch with devout interest the coming and going of all travelers, and confer with them, till he had determined the whereabouts of the Son of the Highest, revealed to him in his vision; then he would go and join himself to this great One, and entreat Him to place Japan on His program as He proceeds to bless the nations of the world. "I can do it," he said, "because this Divine agent that met me on the night after my father's burial, and that saved me from the boiling bath, has given me the call." So with the serene confidence of one who has the last word of proof, Kimura moved with his family to Nagasaki and purchased a house for them there.

CHAPTER V.

AT JAPAN'S GOLDEN GATE.

NAGASAKI is Japan's back gate, her most western city; opening toward Shanghai and Hongkong and the ocean path to the coasts of India, she boasts of the most beautiful sunset in the world.

It was the foreigner's first port of entrance in historic times, and was the spot where the entering wedge of modernism was set in the latter half of last century. It is the place where the Roman Catholic Saint Xavier and his associates planted Christianity with more than their usual thoroughness, due to the diligence of Juan Fernandez, about the time of the Reformation in Europe. It, with the surrounding districts, is the spot made sacred by the blood and suffering of multitudes of martyrs; more, says Charles Henry Robinson, than perished, all told, in Rome under the Caesars; the region where the sparks of Gospel fire smouldered from then till now, and where clandestine worshippers of Christ were discovered when the deadly clouds of Japanese suspicion and inquisition had

rolled away; where a virile type of Christianity was quickly rooted, as soon as Japan was opened; and where, from that day till this, an influential witness to the Full Salvation Gospel has not been wanting.

The old name of Nagasaki, which antedates all history, was Tama' no' ura, which means *the beach of pearls.* It still has pearl fisheries, and we may easily conjecture that the Portugese sailors who came to this port at the close of the fifteenth century were guided by traditions passed down to them by men of their same pursuit in former centuries, dating back to the time of the celebrated Phoenician sailors, who traveled for the merchants of Tyre and Sidon.

The scene, as nature would have it, is a harbor at the end of a finger-shaped bay which leads out into the sea and is protected from serf and typhoon by a half dozen islands, stationed on the boundary between bay and ocean. The ocean currents make directly to this point from the coasts of Foochow, China, thus providing for its early accidental discovery by primitive ships. Nagasaki stands at the end of the bay, guarded by a roof of mountains which shape themselves up like a herd of camels, lying down to rest, with their noses and folded legs slanting toward the wa-

ter. One of the camel backs is a high mountain from which, after the days of Kimura, signals were passed to Tokio, seven or eight hundred miles eastward, when a foreign ship was sighted at sea. This was done by means of a fire kindled in the night time, to be reproduced successively on a line of mountains all the way to Tokio. It was long after Kimura's time that the following notice board was placed near a scene of execution:

"Thus is it that hereafter shall be punished with death all those coming to this empire from Portugal, whether they be ambassadors or common sailors, and even though it be through mistaking the way or because of a tempest that they come: yea, every such person shall perish, even though he be the King of Portugal, or Buddha, or a Japanese god, or the Christian's God Himself, yea all shall die." (*From a History of Christianity in Japan, by Otis Cary*). But in the days of Kimura and before, no port was forbidden, as a rule, except by the expanse of ocean waters and the small size of ships. Nature simply made Nagasaki the first Japanese port.

In a western corner of the city is Pilot Point, a terraced mountain of beautiful symmetry, which serves as a land-mark for sailors in the near-by

seas. Just to the left of this, as you face it from the harbor, is "South Mountain," and a little beyond is "East Mountain," on which, as if answering to the fitness of things, Christian schools have been built. In a ravine formed by these mountains, well up from the track of the mountain torrents, one might have found the new home of Kimura, the incipient prophet of Japan. There stood a little house of two rooms, covered with rice straw; with portable walls, which slide in and out, and which might be lifted from the groove. The frame of the house was heavy hewn poles, but the walls were light and flimsy. It fronted towards a place of prayer on the top of an adjoining mountain, and the back door was toward the Bay.

When Kimura reached Nagasaki he found trading ships which had been drawn by the pearl market and the gold from the mines of Kyushu. As he learned to exchange communications with the sailors who bought and sold, he was told by an importer of pearls that some eastern scholars and astrologers, miraculously guided by a star, had found near Jerusalem "the Hope of all nations," in the person of a young Hebrew; and that after they had found Him and worshipped Him, an angel had confirmed their worship. But, as the

years went by, and other ships came from the same region, the reports were less confident. The "hope" announced by the wise men of the East, after their visit to the Christ, had ceased to cheer their neighbors, so the sailors said, and was a deferred hope.

Impatient of delay, Kimura resolved to sail, and make his own investigation. The signs he had seen had made it clear to him that the time was at hand; so he paid money to the purser of a ship going nearest to the wise men's country and made himself ready to go, even saying farewell to his family; but after he went aboard, the ship remained in port all day because of signs of storm. At the close of that day he received news of an accident to one of his children, which proved almost fatal. This caused him to wait for another ship. The other ship proved to be a year in making its arrival, and then it lay long in port to finish its trading. Kimura's passage having been engaged, he awaited prayerfully the day set for sailing. But, before that day had arrived, as he walked one evening upon the beach, wishing that he might have on the day of sailing as favorable a wind as then was blowing, he saw an excited crowd of people gathered about the dock, making angry gestures, and saw the oarsmen hurriedly pushing the

ship out to sea, while some sailors nervously arranged the sails. Japanese small boats also were thrust out, as if for attack; but the superior weapons of the foreigners made attack impossible. For some reason, a Japanese had been murdered by a foreign boatsman; and his fellow seamen, taking his part to prevent arrest, had produced a riot, from which the foreign crew barely escaped with their lives.

A council of the feudal lords was held, and it was decided that no foreign ship should be permitted to land for twenty years; and any Japanese vessel that crossed the sea to the Asiatic coast was to be seized on its return and the owners imprisoned. Thus Kimura's hope seemed suddenly to sink. Nothing to do but to wait and to pray. But his beautiful life shone forth in the community with increasing power. It was almost impossible to be mean in his presence; and men of violence, and lovers of strong drink, and impure characters, shrank from him and went elsewhere to practice their dark deeds. The sorrowing found comfort, the distressed found relief; and serious men inquired how they might derive the peace that sustained his serene spirit and brightened his radiant face. He was a man with a purpose and a hope.

He waited twenty years, and it seem-

ed little more than twenty days. The time being up, and there being no foreign boat in sight, Kimura shipped on a Japanese boat which was rigged and ready for a trip to a port in China, thinking to reship more quickly from the Chinese port; but, upon arriving there, and being informed that no foreign boats ever came that way, he had to return home on the ship that carried him out.

CHAPTER VI.

CAESAR'S FROWN.

WHEN Kimura returned from China he found a new stirring in the national consciousness of Japan. Closer confederation had developed between the tribes in Hondo and Kyushu; and some ambitious leaders were pleading for an alliance with a great world power far away. There were calamity criers, who taught that some day China or Korea would bear down upon Japan and make bondsmen of their people. They had learned of the greatness of Rome, which was too far off to harm Japan, and in their crude view of world geography might serve to hold China and Korea in check. Commissioners were sent to Rome, but their long pilgrimage was in vain. Rome would not form a treaty. Kimura, while in prayer, had felt impressed to await the return of this commission and hear their report before he should again undertake to go. On the heels of this resolve, he had more chances to go than usual; several ships came and went from his port, while he

held to his purpose and waited. On one of these ships he met an old sailor whom he had seen in port years before; a devout man, of Jewish pursuasion. This man had recently been present at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost; that Pentecost at which devout men were present from "every nation under heaven." The old sailor had there believed the Gospel. It would be difficult to describe the thrill that Kimura felt when for once he could meet with a living follower of that Christ whom, in seeking to approach, he had all these years been as a bird, beating against the bars of its cage. Of course this Christ-worshipper had seen the Lord, Kimura thought, and he hastened to improve his limited means of communication, so that he could learn more. What nation is Christ to favor next, and where is He now? These were among Kimura's questions. But when told by the sailor that he had never seen Christ, the old Japanese was perplexed. How a man could trust and love one he had not seen was not clear to his mind. But the story was told as the sailor heard it, and Kimura's faith caught a clearer vision. Christ had been born; He had fulfilled His ministry and announced His world program; He had been crucified, but had conquered the grave. The sailor failed to explain the ascension to Ki-

mura, so he still believed that he could go and bring Christ from the Roman empire into Japan.

Instead of months, as the optimistic Kimura expected, it was years, before the results of the effort to form a treaty with Rome were well understood. When the commission returned from their tedious journey to Rome, Kimura made a special visit to learn facts, and get the views of prominent men on matters religious. The shrewd Buddhists of India had filled their minds with the theory that Buddha could satisfy the hungry heart of Japan, and representatives of Buddhism were to be invited from China, with a view to supplying the deficiences in provision for Japan's spiritual needs. They told Kimura that Christ had been in Rome, had challenged the authority of the gods, and was under the frown of the Emperor. That His group of followers there was small and without influence. Kimura saw that the testimony of these witnesses was colored with prejudice. He believed their report about Rome frowning upon Christ; but he believed that since Rome had frowned upon both Japan and Christ, this was another argument proving that the Prince of Peace was Japan's Christ.

CHAPTER VII.

SUNSET.

KIMURA returned home with firm determination to take the next ship, without delay, and invite Christ to Japan; he believed now, more surely than ever, that Christ would accept the invitation; and that by bringing the world's Redeemer in ahead of Buddha he would give Japan the real before she received the counterfeit, and thus save them from years of darkness and misery.

He did take ship directly for a port which led to one of Asia's great South-western highways, and he bade fair to make his way to Jerusalem. But his ship, driven from its course by adverse winds, was finally stranded on one of the Loo Choo Islands. There, through hunger and cold and exposure, his strong body, already declining under the weight of years, gave way and left him confirmed in feebleness. After many months a passing schooner brought him back to Nagasaki. As he came faltering into his house his family wept for joy; and he wept, with an unspeakable pathos which told them that

he had shot his last arrow at the mark; that, henceforth, his hope, which had alternately grown brighter, must grow dimmer each day, till the sunset.

What Kimura thought to be the rising of Japan's spiritual sun, after all, was the rear glow of a Sun which had risen upon others, but which must take its course, not from west to east, but from east to west; a Sun which must lighten up a thousand wild hills and dark valleys before its beams should fall upon beautiful Japan. It must start somewhere; and such a glorious Sun could not start his course without bursting backward in his glow as if he were going to rise in reverse order, upon his background.

But the Sun had arisen on Kimura's soul. Such a beautiful old age has seldom adorned any community. The later news that leaked through from the land he had sought to visit gave signs that the shadows were deepening. But, as if by way of recompense, some strange light from heaven shone brighter and brighter upon Kimura's soul, and he seemed to hold council with Japan's future Redeemer. All looked upon him as a prophet; and he was one of those fortunate men who have been able to hand down a spiritual and moral legacy to their children, duplicating themselves in their sons, through successive

generations. The ashes of the ancient saint, planted in a hillside in full view of Nagasaki's port, were to be as precious seed, awaiting the sunshine and rain. The thousands of unselfish prayers he prayed, free from cant and babbling and superstition, were to be bottled up a few short centuries, and then poured out upon Japan.

He had not mistaken the stern prophecy of his Visitor in Matsue. Not one, but many storms, floods, earthquakes and wars must run their course before the Healer of Hearts should walk their village streets. But certainly He should come; the time would be long to our finite minds, but a thousand years are as a day with the Lord of all the earth. Thus spoke the same Voice in Kimura's room as he lay dying; for the same Visitor that gave him his call when he was young came to him that night. Then said the dying Kimura, "Now I understand, and now I die in peace." And as the old saint passed away, the Christ whom, having not seen he loved, appeared at the entrance of heaven to receive his spirit. It was midnight; but to him the room was filled with light, while the hillside and beach around his house shone like noonday. And he recognized his Visitor; who, for the third time in life, stood at his side. First, on the night after his

father's burial, when he only heard the voice, not seeing the form. Next, on the night after he was sentenced to the boiling bath, when he saw in the shadows the form of his Visitor. But on that last night this Visitor stood out in heavenly splendor before the enraptured eyes of Kimura, and said to him: "I have given you a call, and you have fulfilled it as a faithful servant; and I shall patiently linger near this island Kingdom, through the changing years, till the fulness of time is come, when the desire of your heart shall be granted. Do you understand?" Then, smiling sweetly as he passed away, Kimura said: "Now I understand."

THE END

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